

St. Luke School Commission Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 7, 2015, 7:00 PM

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.

In attendance: Andy Bauer, Matt Behringer, Andy Borland, Beth Leffler, Sue MacGill, Wendy Mehringer, Eileen Metzger, Tim O'Brien, Phil Poirier, Msgr. Schaedel, Jen Schaefer, Teresa Schutzman, Suzanne Sherby, Rob Shumaker, Steve Weber;

The March 3, 2015 meeting minutes were offered for approval. Andy Bauer requested that 1st grade teacher Chris Kelly had specifically stated twice in the March meeting that there is a need for more aid time in order to adequately meet the classroom needs. The March 3 minutes were approved, pending the requested change.

Principal's Report – Steve Weber

Administrative Software: As we have noted, the Archdiocese is shifting from MSP to Jupiter for their preferred, but not required, admin software. I felt that the Jupiter system, while it had many pluses, would have still required us to have a separate lunch program and did not have much built in support. We have reviewed two new systems and are considering two previous systems. We reviewed **Rediker** Software, which did meet almost all of our needs. However, it is very expensive and the set up costs are more than double others. (\$12K annually, up from about \$6K plus \$14K initial set up charge). They do appear willing to come down but the numbers are scary.

We reviewed **Sycamore** Software, which is used by the entire Diocese of Evansville and was selected by St. Simon for their school. Their cost is much more reasonable at \$.85 per student per month or a little over \$6K per year with a \$1K set up charge. They do have most of the features we need and they have Indiana reporting built in already. I also requested a bid from **Teacher-ease**, the company we used prior to MSP. The teachers liked the system when we had it, but at the time it lacked a text alert function that we needed. That function does exist within Teacher-ease now. Their cost for a full function operation, but no direct state reporting is \$6,500. We could also continue with **MSP** (sometimes better the devil you know) for the same amount. MSP has had recent upgrades that have improved functioning.

Phil Poirier mentioned that from the parent perspective My Student's Progress seems more fully developed. Neither Rediker nor Sycamore were able to send automatic emails or other messages when a student received a grade below a parent determined threshold as MSP can. Both said they were working on that function and hope to roll out soon, but it doesn't currently exist in their platforms.

Assistant Principal Search: I have received 21 applications. My initial review indicates that about 11 are worthy of an interview. I will meet with Msgr. Schaedel before offering interviews. I'd like to put together a initial interview team consisting of one school commission member, two teachers and me. The Strategic Planning Academic group has made several recommendations regarding the new hire and job description which are under consideration.

Staffing Update: Sadly, Mrs. Kathy Chapman, our wonderful MS LA teacher has decided to retire from full time work. She would like to come back in a part-time capacity, especially to help develop our speech program and work with student both on the enrichment and resource spectrums. Mrs. Sally Meyer, our long time librarian is also going to retire. Her assistant, Mrs. Jennifer Burns, is interested in taking on the rest of Mrs. Meyer's hours. Mrs. Burns has done a wonderful job and so this would be a good move.

Mrs. Chris Kelly and Mrs. Dede Moore have been accepted into the Notre Dame, English Language Learner program. This is a great way to help meet our ELL need without having to hire another staff member.

Enrollment Update: K: 61, 1: 65, 2: 60, 3: 64, 4: 76, 5: 69, 6: 75, 7: 65, 8: 64

Total Projected as of 4/8/15: 599. Note that we are still getting calls or contacts almost daily, so I suspect this is a reasonable, if not low end, number. In fact, 3 new applications came in today, after the update above was written.

Business Items

Budget Report: It was noted that the budget is based on current enrollment numbers which still seem to be growing. The numbers reflect an educated guess, but all appearances are that the revenue side will likely look better than projected. The following items were questioned/noted in the conversation regarding the budget:

- There has been an increase in the government subsidy to the cafeteria this year, so that number is lower
- The budget was prepared using the Rediker software cost which is the highest it could possibly be, so there is flexibility. Steve indicated that Rediker seems willing to negotiate a lower cost, but numbers have not been discussed.
- There is a \$20,000 increase in cost of living raises mandated by the Archdiocese. Additionally there are increases in retirement costs and the cost of health care is up by 5%
- There is a \$5-6000 set aside in the contingency monies for professional development. We have not used the amount expected in the past year due to some outside groups covering expenses.
- There is money in the budget for CYO and for the insurance we are required to carry in case athletes or students are injured or accidents occur during CYO activities or during school. The insurance covers any co-pay's not covered by the involved party's insurance, or the whole amount in the event the family doesn't have health insurance.
- TCE grants (Total Catholic Education) in the budget: We currently have one teacher working toward an Administrative degree. We pay for half the cost and the Archdiocese covers the other half. The teacher offers a five year commitment to our school and would be responsible for re-paying the pro-rated amount if they do not meet that commitment.
- The school bears an occupancy charge in the budget. Buildings and Grounds computes the amount based on an equation which considers the amount of square footage used and time spent in use. There is a cleaning and maintenance portion of this charge. Athletics pays an amount computed in this way as well.
- The projected expense for durable texts is lower due to contingency funds still held from lower expense last year. Anything not spent on texts is automatically held over in the contingency fund.
 - The term durable text is somewhat fluid. For example, the Latin books we use are both durable and consumable, so the numbers can be thought of as one for simplicity.
 - Tim O'Brien suggested that the shift to consumables may leave inadequate funds for future.
 - Steve said that we have not been spending significant funds on text book adoptions in the past few years due to the uncertainty of the longevity of the Indiana State Standards in the past few years. Steve feels it would be irresponsible to put money into texts which may very well require change well before the end of their useful life cycle. The purpose of the contingency fund is to give us as much flexibility as possible. All funds remaining for

texts of any kinds are automatically placed in a restricted budget area and can roll over through multiple budget cycles.

- The bottom line numbers are \$2.84 million in projected revenues and \$3.3 million in projected expenses.

Monsignor stated that the requested Parish subsidy for the 2015/2016 budget is essentially the same as last year. Overall, he thinks the numbers reflect the good management of the School Administration. He said that the use of conservative enrollment numbers makes him feel comfortable with the proposed budget.

Wendy Mehringer motioned that the budget be approved. Andy Bauer seconded the motion. The budget was approved unanimously.

Edits to Bylaws and Standing Rules: Changes or questions regarding the following were discussed

- Bylaws: Page 1: The School Commission has an obligation to report the status of the school to the parish. The President of the Commission is required to make a semi-annual report to the parish council. Additionally, the commission send a representative to the Parish Council meetings, and invites a rep from the Parish Council to attend all School Commission meetings. Steve mentioned that the church bulletin should also be a good vehicle for fulfilling this responsibility. Additionally, the minutes of all meetings are recorded and posted on the website.
- Standing Rules: The President's vote was questioned in that the rules state the President only votes to break a tie or to make a tie. It was felt that the president's vote in the case of making a tie is essentially a veto. It was agreed the language was ambiguous but that it will be left as is.
- In section 7, it was clarified that an increase in tuition or fees must be discussed first in an executive committee meeting, and brought for discussion in one meeting. It cannot be voted on until the subsequent meeting, which essentially means that any increase in fees or tuition requires at least a 6 week timeframe prior to implementation.
- Article III section 2. Elections will be held the last weekend in April unless approval to change the date is given. It was felt change will often be necessary due to first communion and possible conflict with the Easter season.
- Email as an accepted form of communication was added
- Article 9 which allows the use of a parliamentarian remains as an option in case proceedings ever become contentious.
- The Policy Manual #3101 will be changed to reflect the use of a third party vendor for tuition collection as the standard manner of payment. Other methods are discouraged, but the business office can make exceptions for hardship. It was agreed that Tim will work with Patrick to clean up the language of this section to most accurately reflect the tuition payment options, but that the language should reflect that a third party electronic payment is the standard and that the language saying that payment can be made by check will be removed.
- Policy Manual # 3501-3503 The Hackl Family School Endowment was discussed. It allows up to \$10,000 per year to be awarded in TCE grants which fund professional development. These funds are reflected in the revenue side of the budget. Saint Luke benefits from two endowments; the Hackl Family School Endowment and the School Endowment.
- Section 3505-3506 is updated to reflect new financial aid options. When this was put in place, only the parish fund existed for tuition assistance. Most aid now comes from the SGO or the State Choice Scholarship

- Prior to the recession, about \$20,000 in aid came from the parish fund. During, the number jumped to \$60,000. For the current year, only about \$5000 in aid has been distributed from the parish fund, while \$57,000 has been awarded through the SGO and \$236,000 through State Choice Scholarships.
- The overall goal is to choose the best way to meet the needs of an individual family.
- Aid from the parish fund is given only to parishioners, while non-parishioners can receive SGO grants.
- The parish fund is maintained because it adds a level of flexibility to ensure we can meet any need
- 78% of SGO and Choice scholarship recipients are parishioners.
- A third party vendor is used to determine eligibility. Fees are charged by the vendor. Steve prefers not to mandate the use of the third party vendor so that we can maintain additional flexibility in cases of real need to keep family out of pocket low.
- Book and supply fees serve as the enrollment fee. This fee can be included in the State Choice grants if the family meets the threshold.
- The rules which only allowed children either starting Kindergarten or moving from a public school to receive a State Choice Scholarship have been changed so that now if the youngest child in the family receives a scholarship, older siblings are automatically eligible.
- The finance committee determines 3 grant levels available from the SGO and determines what balance must be maintained in the fund.
- It was clarified that the SGO grants are individual, with a given amount applied to each child, whereas the parish fund functions as a grant to the entire family and takes tuition discounts into account
 - Teresa suggested that we should have had this discussion during Lent, as it would have been a more onerous penance than any of us probably did. ☺.
- Tim will work with Steve to appropriately clarify this language, especially the financial aid and SGO/State Choice portions so that it most accurately and clearly reflects the reality of the new State grants and other assistance used.
- Section 5101 of the policy manual states applications for admission must be received no later than two week prior to the start of school if the applicant lives in the Indianapolis area and specifically states only exceptions for out of area students.
 - This reflects problems we have had with not having enough time to complete the admissions process properly in the past
 - We do make exceptions and take students mid year at times. This year we accepted 6 new students at the semester mark.
 - Monsignor feels the “Indianapolis area” is too broad a term and that it would be perfectly reasonable to take a family who is moving, for example. From Southport as it would obviously be burdensome to them to remain in school on the south side until a new academic year
 - It was suggested that perhaps part of the reason the policy is in place is to ensure proper scrutiny of older students who might be making transfers for serious disciplinary or other issues and that the potential for these types of situations should be considered in the case of transfers from truly local schools.
 - It was agreed that this particular issue needs more work outside of this meeting

- The question of whether we knowingly admit non-parishioners with learning disabilities and how we process whether we can adequately serve those children. It was agreed that this part of the admissions policy needs further thought.
 - Section 5700 states that threats or acts of violence are not tolerated. There was a question as to whether some language about bullying needs to be added, but the general feel seemed to be that would be overkill and too hard to define.

Changes will be circulated in advance of the next meeting. Questions or comments should be emailed to Tim O'Brien. Rob thanked Tim for taking on this very involved and tedious process and for seeing it through so effectively.

Strategic Planning /Updates and committee reports

- **Technology** – Phil Poirier: Matt and Phil have been attending webinars and trying to represent the parent perspective for the new software selection. They have met with Jen Eckert to discuss current needs. They plan to contact other north deanery schools to get a sense of the approach to technology other schools are taking. They have also gleaned some information from the site visits conducted by the Academic committee. Phil said that at least one school candidly told them that they have not found the investment in technology to be effective or worth the effort at the elementary level and are considering that point of view as well.
- **Development** – Sue MacGill: They met with Ronnie Miller again and are still discussing possibilities for communicating via media such as snapchat and twitter. Again, they found Ronnie very receptive.
- **Facilities** – Andy Bauer:
 - The Cubby experiment in Room 102 is complete
 - The computer wing and the 6th grade classrooms were painted over spring break.
 - Work was completed to replace lighting in the stairwells with LED lights which will eliminate the need to replace for many years.
 - It looks like the south gym floor will be replaced in June. The project is awaiting final approval, but appears likely.
 - Rob noted that a significant amount of work and improvements have been completed this year and thanked Andy for his efforts representing the school with Buildings and grounds. Andy expressed that both Sandy Miller and Todd Moore have appreciated the representation and seem to clearly recognize the needs in the school and intend to address them. As always, the real issue is prioritizing and finding funding.
- **Excellence** – Beth Leffler:
 - The committee met with Steve and Monsignor and made two interim recommendations believing that the timing of new hires and planning for next year necessitated:
 - Staffing: After the study and information gathering completed to this point, the committee believes the school would be best served by making the Assistant Principal position into two separate full time roles
 - An Academic Dean who would be responsible for curriculum mapping and other academic issues, text book and materials selection. This person would also work to further academic differentiation, allowing students to work at their own levels and to their fullest potential
 - A Dean of Students who would serve as admissions director which would include discipline and also a student advocate with special focus on children with IEP's and other special needs

- **Scheduling:** The committee believes that the schedule should be significantly revamped to give greater focus to core subjects to allow for differentiation as observed at some other area schools.

Committee/Liaison Reports

- **Finance** – Wendy Mehringer – No further report
- **Nominations** – Phil Poirier – 2 people are interested in running, both with school children. We are still looking for more nominees, particularly an at large candidate. One potential at large has contacted Msgr. The election will be the first weekend in May.
- **Faith Formation** – Teresa Schutzman – No report – there is a meeting coming up
- **Buildings and Grounds** – Andy Bauer – All items covered in strategic planning update
- **Stewardship** – Matt Behringer – no report
- **PTO** – Jen Schaefer – Nothing of significance to report. Jen encouraged all to come to Trivia Night on April 11th
- **Pastoral Council** – Eileen O’Brien Metzger – Pastoral Council wants a copy of the Strategic Plan. It was noted the plan is posted on the website, but we will get it to them.
- **SLAC** – Andy Borland – No report/Andy absent
- **Parish Communications** – Suzanne Sherby – no report

Pastors Comments - Monsignor had three comments:

- He believes the school is well run and we should be thankful.
- **Communications:** With regard to communications, we must look at Ronnie as a willing editor, but not as a reporter. She is happy to publish and communicate anything we bring her, but she cannot be expected to be out finding stories. That is the responsibility of the school/school commission.
- With regard to the admissions discussion, Monsignor (who apparently gave up a promising career as a comedian) said, “We don’t need any more dumb protestants. We have plenty of dumb Catholics already!”

Closing Prayer was said.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:25 P.M.

An optional tour of the School building was led by Steve.

Respectfully submitted by Suzanne Sherby, School Commission Secretary

Important Dates:

Next Executive Committee/Finance Meeting: Thursday, April 23, 2015 at 7:30 am

Next School Commission Meeting: Tuesday May 5, 2015 at 7pm